



## **Ministry update for Synod 2019 Theology and the Arts Ministry**

Throughout our Synod the arts are recognised and affirmed for engaging new and emerging ways of being Church. Christina Rowntree, Theology and the Arts Ministry, consults with, inspires, and encourages congregations engaging life, worship and mission through the arts - whether a congregation has an active and continuing arts centre or program, or is keen to offer a one-off visual art exhibition, a festival or a performance in their community.

- **Consultation and resourcing**

Collaboration with congregations, presbyteries, and other eLM colleagues has proven the best way to enliven projects with a range of art forms and creative processes. Effective team collaboration brings the arts into many aspects of the PFA's work areas. *e.g.* Interfaith month (2018) at Ormond UC where each week intergenerational arts activities connected with a different faith tradition. Christina can also resource with advice in community cultural development to support planning, building connections between artists and communities. *e.g.* at Habitat Uniting Church and SWell Conference.

- **Labyrinth**

A particular focus of our work is offering the labyrinth as a path of prayer. Christina is a *Veriditas* trained labyrinth facilitator, recently leading labyrinth walks for a presbytery retreat, in worship at Wheelers Hill UC, with the Alpine Regional Resource Ministry community, and for the City of Darebin's interfaith program. For Sacrededge festival this year and last, an Ocean Labyrinth was installed in a public park on the Queenscliff foreshore and participants invited to meditate on the gifts, and pray for greater care of the oceans.

The Peace Labyrinth, a 7 circuit, Petit-Chartres canvas labyrinth, designed and painted by participants of the newly formed Australian Labyrinth Network, is available for loan through eLM. It measures 7.3 metres in diameter and fits most church halls.

- **Storytelling**

People are seeking skills and confidence in oral storytelling. Storytellers are contributing their art in congregations across our Synod - in worship, with children and their families, in aged care settings. Pilgrim Theological College offers The Art and Practice of Oral Storytelling, led by Julie Perrin and Christina Rowntree. This elective is offered bi-annually, so this alternate year we offer Space for Story retreats and a workshop with Pádraig Ó Tuama to maintain and develop storytellers' skills ([Registration and information can be found here](#)). Christina offers short workshops in story, *e.g.* at *The leaf has a song in it*, Castlemaine.

- **Teaching and facilitation**

The arts are often engaged in teaching at Pilgrim Theological College, candidate formation and in lay leadership training. Christina leads experiential workshops, guest lectures, and at times contributes to the formation program. Creativity is encouraged in weekly chapel services in the chapel. A changing art exhibition program in the gallery of the CTM is integrated with teaching and learning. All these activities enliven the Centre for Theology and Ministry. Most recently, a significant exhibition, *William Kelly: Just Art* was presented in conjunction with the Earth@Peace Conference. Future exhibitions include the annual Uniting Church Icon Schools exhibition, and participants at the Gifford Art Project, part of Uniting in second





semester. A fascinating exhibition of embroideries, *Dante Melanie and Me*, by artist Mary Good will be shown in winter. The launch of this exhibition on 26 July includes storytelling of Dante's Divine Comedy by theatre director, and performer, John Bolton.

- **Artists**

Theology and the Arts Ministry supports and encourages artists of faith, through networking, exhibition opportunities and seminars such as *Outreach through the Arts* at Kinross Arts Centre, Toorak Uniting Church.

- **Intercultural Worship**

Inspired by the opportunities to lead worship at the Assembly meeting, we are creating a pilot series, working with congregations currently engaged in Intercultural Worship. The outcome of this will be a resource that can be used in a variety of worshipping communities to assist with facilitating and engaging vibrant and meaningful Intercultural Worship.

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